DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 599 PS 014 368

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TITLE National Forum Panel Presentation on Roles and Responsibilities in Educational Reform Indianapolis, Indiana, December 6-8, 1983).
PUB DATE 8 Dec 83
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS Hawaii; Hawaii State Department of Education

ABSTRACT

Roles and responsibilities for educational reform in Hawaii have involved several levels of planning and organizational involvement. A draft document entitled "Our Vision of Excellence" has been compiled by the State Department of Education. Following review by educators, parents, community leaders, and other concerned agencies, a revised edition, leading to a plan of action, has been scheduled for publication in spring 1984. Educational reform meetings have taken place and/or have been planned by the Board of Education, the Board of Regents, State Advisory Council members, the Hawaii Education Council, the governor, state legislators, state and county officials, business and community organizations, unions, private school representatives, and the University of Hawaii. Education must be a shared responsibility with the state, schools, teachers, students, parents, and the general community working together through local, national, and state levels. (BJD)

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NATIONAL FORUM PANEL PRESENTATION ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

BY DR. DONNIS H. THOMPSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

DECEMBER 8, 1983

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BRING THE ALOHA OF HAWAII'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ALL OF YOU AT THIS FORUM. WE HAVE A LOT TO SHARE WITH YOU, AND VERY LITTLE TIME -- SO I WILL MOVE QUICKLY INTO OUR TOPIC AND GIVE YOU A BRIEF IDEA OF HOW ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM ARE SHAPING UP IN OUR STATE.

IT IS GOING TO BE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT, WITH ALL OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED AND EDUCATORS TAKING THE LEAD.

AFTER THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM OF OUR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDIED ALL THE NATIONAL REPORTS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO DATE AND CONSIDERED THE RELEVANCE OF THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS TO WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE IN HAWAII, AS WELL AS THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR DIRECTIONS AND THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED BY OUR STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION -- WE PUT ALL OF OUR THINKING TOGETHER INTO ONE DOCUMENT, A VISION OF EXCELLENCE, A SHARED VISION OF IDEAL SCHOOLING FOR HAWAII. WE BELIEVE WE HAVE VERY GOOD SCHOOLS AT PRESENT, BUT THEY CAN BE BETTER IN MANY WAYS. WE WANT NO LESS THAN EXCELLENCE.

AT THIS POINT, OUR VISION OF EXCELLENCE IS A DRAFT DOCUMENT, INTENDED TO SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR DIALOGUE THROUGHOUT THE STATE. IT WAS FIRST PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, AND NEXT A MAJOR PRESENTATION WAS MADE TO A GATHERING OF ALL THE ADVISORY COUNCILS IN THE STATE.

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THE OCCASION WAS A BIG, TWO-DAY CONFERENCE INVOLVING SCHOOL LEVEL COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND PTA'S, DISTRICT COUNCILS, STATE LEVEL ADVISORY BODIES OF ALL KINDS, EDUCATORS -- ALTOGETHER, MORE THAN 300 PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NOW DISCUSSING THE VISION OF EXCELLENCE IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITIES.

DURING THE REST OF THIS MONTH AND INTO JANUARY, MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AMONG TEACHERS AND ALL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PERSONNEL, WITH STATE LEGISLATORS, OTHER STATE AND COUNTY OFFICIALS, BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, UNIONS, AND PRIVATE SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES, TO OBTAIN THEIR REACTIONS AND INPUT INTO THIS DOCUMENT.

INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM THESE VARIOUS MEETINGS WILL THEN BE ANALYZED, SYNTHESIZED AND TRANSLATED INTO A REVISED VISION OF EXCELLENCE -- A VISION THAT WILL TRULY BE SHARED BY ALL PEOPLE OF HAWAII.

THAT PROCESS WILL BE COMPLETED THIS SPRING, AT WHICH TIME WE WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS TO BRING OUR VISION OF EXCELLENCE TO REALITY.

IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION ARE BEING ADDRESSED IN OTHER WAYS, AS WELL. ONE MAJOR UNDERTAKING INVOLVES A JOINT EFFORT BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE BOARD OF REGENTS, THE POLICY-MAKING AND GOVERNING BODIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM, TO IDENTIFY NEW AND COMMON DIRECTIONS, AS WELL AS TO TACKLE POLICY ISSUES FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM ALL THE WAY FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION. A FINAL REPORT ON THE WORK OF THIS JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE IS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER.

ANOTHER SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS HAS BEEN INITIATED BY THE HAWAII EDUCATION COUNCIL, THE STATE ORGANIZATION AFFILIATED WITH THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES.

UNDER SPONSORSHIP OF OUR GOVERNOR, GEORGE ARIYOSHI, ONE SESSION HAS BEEN HELD FOR EDUCATORS, LEGISLATIVE LEADERS AND OTHERS CONCERNED WITH EDUCATION TO SHARE OUR VIEWS AND CONCERNS AND DISCUSS EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM. MORE OF THESE MEETINGS ARE PLANNED, THE NEXT ONE TO BE SPONSORED BY STATE LEGISLATORS.

IN THE DISCUSSIONS AND MEETINGS THAT HAVE BEEN HELD SO FAR, AND IN OUR VISION OF EXCELLENCE, WE HAVE ALREADY IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE. SOME OF THESE ARE THINGS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED IN OUR SCHOOLS WITH EXISTING RESOURCES, AND WE ARE ADDRESSING THEM.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS, WE KNOW, WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FUNDING, WHICH IN HAWAII, IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE; PERHAPS CHANGES IN POLICY, WHICH IS THE SCHOOL BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITY; AND POSSIBLE CHANGES IN OUR UNION CONTRACTS, WHICH MUST BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE UNIONS REPRESENTING TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL OFFICERS.

HAWAII HAS A BUILT-IN ADVANTAGE IN PLANNING FOR STATEWIDE IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION, BECAUSE WE HAVE A SINGLE, STATEWIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM -- AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE HIGHLY CENTRALIZED IN A SINGLE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AND STATE LEGISLATURE.

HAWAII ALSO IS AN INTENSELY POLITICAL STATE. DECISIONS ABOUT EDUCATION ARE MADE BY ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND THIS MEANS THAT POLICIES AND APPROPRIATIONS MUST HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE CITIZENS WHO VOTE. THIS IS ONE REASON FOR OUR INITIAL APPROACH TO GENERATE A SHARED VISION OF EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOLING AND TO OBTAIN A STRONG COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO THE CHANGES WHICH MUST BE MADE.

OUR VISION POINTS OUT VERY CLEARLY THAT EDUCATION MUST BE A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY -- WITH THE STATE, THE SCHOOLS, THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS, PARENTS AND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER IN THE SAME DIRECTION, TOWARD THE SAME VISION OF EXCELLENCE.

WE BELIEVE THIS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION ALSO MUST EXTEND TO ALL LEVELS, NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL. SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL REPORTS HAVE VERY HIGH COST IMPLICATIONS -- AND IF THERE IS A STATE OR A SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE COUNTRY THAT CAN AFFORD TO PICK UP THE WHOLE TAB BY THEMSELVES, THEY ARE MOST EXCEPTIONAL.

THIS NATIONAL CONFERENCE IS MOST VALUABLE TO ALL OF US AS A FORUM FOR DIALOGUE AND SHARING OF IDEAS. WE MUST HAVE MORE THAN TALK, HOWEVER. WE MUST ALSO HAVE A NATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE FORM OF HIGH LEVEL SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN EVERY PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES.